

As is recited in independent Claim 1, the present invention relates to a process for forming images and includes the step of conducting recording on a recording medium provided with an image-receiving layer. The image-receiving layer contains particles having a diameter of 0.1 to 10  $\mu\text{m}$  for imparting a matted appearance to the surface of the image-receiving layer. The process further includes the step of laminating a laminating film comprising a thermoplastic film without a backing layer onto the image-receiving layer and smoothing a surface of the thermoplastic film by heating and pressurizing means to bond a back side of the thermoplastic film onto the image-receiving layer.

Support for the amendments to Claim 1 can be found in the specification at least page 13, line 26 through page 14, line 3.

As is recited in independent Claim 6, the present invention relates to an apparatus for forming images including an ink-jet head, a laminate section, and heating and pressurizing means. The ink-jet head records on a recording medium. The laminate section laminates a laminating film comprised of a thermoplastic film without a backing layer onto the recording medium on which recording has been conducted. The heating and pressurizing means smooths the thermoplastic film by heating and pressurizing and bonding a back side of the thermoplastic film onto an image-receiving layer of the recording medium.

With the above arrangement and method, both an image-protecting layer and glossiness can be provided on an image-receiving paper sheet after printing. In order to improve ink absorptivity, the recording medium can be provided with an image-

receiving layer which can be porous have a matted appearance. At the same time, the image-protecting layer can both protect the image-receiving layer of the recording medium and give a glossy appearance.

Nakazawa, et al. relates to a laminating apparatus that includes a laminate film feeder, a heater for heating the fed laminate film and a device to pressurize the sheet and the laminate film. As understood by Applicants, the laminate film is of two layers with a hot-melt adhesive coating. Applicants submit that Nakazawa, et al. describes an old laminating technique in which an insoluble polymer film having a glossy surface and heat resistance is laminated with the sheet on which an image is formed using an adhesive. The image protection properties and glossiness depend on the properties of the polymer film itself and are not imparted to the polymer film during the laminating process.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that Nakazawa, et al. does not disclose or suggest laminating a laminating film comprising a thermoplastic film without a backing layer onto an image-receiving layer and smoothing a surface of the thermoplastic film by heating and pressurizing means to bond a back side of thermoplastic film onto the image-receiving layer, as is recited in independent Claim 1.

Nor does Nakazawa, et al. disclose or suggest laminating a laminating film comprised of a thermoplastic film without a backing layer onto a recording medium and smoothing the thermoplastic film by heating and pressurizing and bonding a backside of the thermoplastic film onto an image-receiving layer of the recording medium, as is recited in independent Claim 6.

Furthermore, Applicants submit that Nakazawa, et al. does not disclose or suggest that the image-receiving layer contains particles having a diameter of 0.1 to 10  $\mu\text{m}$  for imparting a matted appearance to the surface of the image-receiving layer, as is also recited in independent Claim 1.

Thus, Nakazawa, et al. fails to disclose or suggest important features of the present invention recited in independent Claims 1 and 6.

Yamamoto, et al. describes providing gloss to a print by lamination treatment of the recorded surface with a film after image formation. Applicants submit that the preferable method described in Yamamoto, et al. is the transfer/peeling-off type of lamination technique that is described in the background section of Applicants' specification. Ogawa, et al. describes a gloss-providing layer formed on an ink-receiving layer of an ink jet recording sheet and was cited by the Examiner for teaching specific numerical values of the gloss. Applicants submit that the gloss in Ogawa, et al. is provided in advance, not in a post-printing process. Tanaka, et al. was cited by the Examiner for teaching laminating by layering an adhesive layer and a resin layer. However, these citations are not believed to remedy the deficiencies of Nakazawa, et al. noted above with respect to independent Claims 1 and 6.

Thus, independent Claims 1 and 6 are patentable over the citations of record. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the §§ 102 and 103 rejections are respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the present invention is patentably defined by independent Claims 1 and 6. Dependent Claims 2-5 are

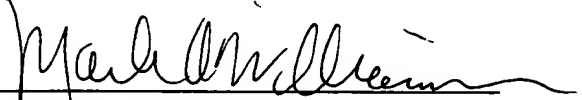
also allowable, in their own right, for defining features of the present invention in addition to those recited in their respective independent claims. Individual consideration of the dependent claims is requested.

This Amendment After Final Rejection does not raise new issues, is an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, and is believed to clearly place this application in condition for allowance. This Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicants earnestly believed that the prior Amendment placed the subject application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment under 37 CFR 1.116 is respectfully requested.

Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action, and an early Notice of Allowance are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE TO CLAIMS

1. (Amended) A process for forming images comprising the steps of:  
conducting recording on a recording medium provided with an  
image-receiving layer, the image-receiving layer containing particles having a diameter of  
0.1 to 10  $\mu$ m for imparting a matted appearance to the surface of the image-receiving layer;  
and

laminating a laminating film comprising a thermoplastic film without a  
backing layer onto the image-receiving layer and smoothing a surface of the thermoplastic  
film by heating and pressurizing means to bond a back side of the thermoplastic film onto  
the image-receiving layer.

6. (Amended) An apparatus for forming images comprising:  
an ink-jet head for recording on a recording medium;  
a [laminates] lamine section for laminating a laminating film comprised of  
a thermoplastic film without a backing layer onto the recording medium on which  
recording has been conducted; and

heating and pressurizing means for smoothing the thermoplastic film by  
heating and pressurizing and bonding a back side of the thermoplastic film onto [the] an  
image-receiving layer of the recording medium.